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ABSTRACT

Written for employers, this pamphlet provides a concise picture of many aspects of employer supported child care. The influx of working parents into the workplace--especially mothers with young children--has increased stress and pressure for both employees and employers. This, in turn, has increased the mutual dependence between businesses and the family. Consequently, new employer strategies are emerging to strengthen both the family and the workplace. The family of the 1980s is profoundly affected by the workplace environment, and businesses are affected by the concerns and responsibilities of employees. Employers bear the burden of the shortage of child care and the problems associated with obtaining quality care for children of employees. Financial problems and family demands, such as inadequate child care, invariably lead to absenteeism, turnover, and lower productivity. The company ultimately pays for the time lost trying to resolve these problems. Although employers often equate child care benefits with onsite day care centers, other options are available to businesses. These options can be divided into basically four categories: flexible personnel policies, information programs, financial assistance, and direct services. In addition to a brief description of each option, a partial listing of existing programs, benefits to employers, and points to consider in terms of pros and cons before beginning a program are provided. (DST)

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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: NEW DIRECTIONS

Corporate Support for Employees with Dependents

PS 015335

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Overview

With the influx of working parents into the workplace—especially mothers with young children—comes increased stresses and pressures for both employees and employers. This has increased the mutual dependence between businesses and the family. Consequently, new employer strategies are emerging to strengthen both the family and the workplace. The family of the 1980's is profoundly affected by the workplace environment and, in turn, businesses are impacted by the concerns and responsiblities of employees.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women in the labor force since 1960. Women have traditionally borne the responsibility for child care and as they increasingly join the ranks of the employed, new strategies are being developed to deal with the care of their children during working hours. The statistics which follow give a clear picture of the dramatic change in the American workforce and the need for work policies which are supportive of families.

- In *1950*, only 12% of mothers with children under six were employed; by *1982*, *50%* were in the labor force.
- *43.2%* of married working women, *53.1%* of separated working women, and *68.9%* of divorced working women had children under six years of age.
- Not only are more women with young children working, they are returning to the labor force sooner after the birth of a child. Among women with a child under a year, one-third of married women and 50% of single mothers are working.

As more women work, men are beginning to share equally in child care responsibilities and in increasing numbers, they are single heads of households with total responsibility for the children. The need for increased support for working families is not, therefore, a totally female problem.

Employers bear the burden of the shortage of child care and the problems associated with obtaining quality care for children of employees. Financial problems and family demands, such as inadequate child care, invariably lead to absenteeism, turnover and lower productivity. The company ultimately pays for the time lost trying to resolve these problems.

- **"EMPLOYERS SHOULD BRACE FOR A LOT OF CHANGES IN BENEFIT PROGRAMS to fit the two-income family, single-head family and other recent trends. 'Cafeteria' plans may be one answer . . . offering a selection of benefits . . . plus such extras as day care, not yet widely offered but in great demand."**

  ***Kiplinger News Letter*, June 25, 1982.**

- **"A RECENT HARRIS POLL SHOWS THAT 87% OF PERSONNEL EXECUTIVES EXPECT CHILD CARE TO BECOME A COMPANY BENEFIT BY 1988. The history of how new employee benefits become part of standard benefit packages reinforces the probability that the specialists' prediction will become reality."**

  ***Management Review*, American Management Associations, "Day Care: Still Waiting It's Turn as a Standard Benefit", May, 1981.**

- **"YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MAKING THEIR WAY INTO THE WORKPLACE—NOT IN THE FLESH, BUT AS AN ISSUE. There are now more households with two working parents than ever, and businesses are beginning to take their first toddling steps to meet such workers' child needs."**

  ***Nation's Business*, "Employers Who Help With The Kids", February, 1984.**

- **"BUSINESSMEN AND EDUCATORS INVOLVED WITH DAY CARE HAVE SOME ADVICE TO OFFER COMPANIES CONSIDERING DAY CARE BENEFITS. 'Try to find out what employees want and consider all the alternatives before deciding what format the service will be offered in,' says Williams Mahler, Jr., Manager of Compensation and Benefits for Commerce Union. 'Depending on the alternative chosen, there will be a wide cost range. Don't construct a downtown day-care center and then find out your employees are not going to use it."**

  ***Advantage*, The Nashville, Tennessee business magazine,"Day Care Assistance; The Latest Trend in Employee Benefits," November, 1981.**

Funding by

Arkansas Social Services

Arkansas ADVocates for Children and Families

Suite 931, Donaghey Building
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Dividends

What can a company realistically expect to gain from instituting family support systems? When asked in a 1978 survey, employers listed these seven benefits accrued to a company with sensitive child care policies.

1) Attracted new employees - gave a recruitment advantage
2) Lowered absenteeism
3) Improved attitudes toward employer
4) Increased publicity
5) Lowered job turnover
6) Improved employee work attitudes
7) Improved community relations[1]

PCA International, Inc. of North Carolina reported that in a labor force of 2-3 percent unemployment, there were 3,500 walk-in applicants in a previous fiscal year while other companies in the area had very few non-recruited applicants. Corporate management felt that this was due in part to PCA's child care facility.[2]

For some companies lowering turnover and thereby reducing retraining costs would more than outweigh initial expenses for a child care benefit program. The public relations value of the program, both within and outside of the community, is another tremendous asset. Companies which undertake such a project are receiving national publicity and achieving strengthened relations in their local communities.

[1]Perry, K.S. Survey and Analysis of Employer Sponsored Day Care in the United States. Doctoral Dissertation, Milwaukee, 1978. University of Wisconsin.

[2]P.C.A. International, Inc., Child Development Center Brochure

Options

You, as employers, provide the primary requirement of parents—a job. However, as our world increases in complexity and a mutual dependence between business and family grows, working parents are increasingly responsive to programs which help them balance the demands of work and family life.

Although employers often equate child care benefits with onsite day care centers there are many and varied options available to businesses. These options can be divided into basically four categories: Flexible Personnel Policies, Information Programs, Financial Assistance and Direct Services. Many of these options can be implemented at a minimal cost while providing benefits to the company.

In the ensuing pages you will find detailed information on each of the options. In addition to a brief description of each option, there follows a partial listing of existing programs, benefits to employers and points to consider before beginning a program.

1. Flexible Personnel Policies

Many employers have experimented with new personnel policies which are more flexible and responsible to the needs of working parents. Alternative work scheduling is an approach which has achieved great success and includes these variations:

1) **Compressed time** - full time work with more hours per day and less days per week
2) **Staggered hours** - flexible regular schedule of work hours based on employee's choice
3) **Flextime** - flexible daily starting and stopping based on worker's choice
4) **Regular part-time** - part-day or part-week working hours, often involving prorated pay and benefits
5 **Job-pairing** - two or more people jointly responsible for filling one full time job
6) **Variable working hours** - employee contracts for a block of work and has the option of hours in which to complete the task
7) **Task contracting** - employee is responsible for completing work in a given time frame and need not specify the number of hours or particular hours worked
8) **At home work** - the employee fulfills job duties at home and is especially applicable as more companies convert to computers

In addition to flexible work scheduling, many companies offer other services which assist parents and families. Counseling services for employees experiencing family problems such as alcoholism are very prevalent. Some companies allow employees a certain number of leave days specifically to care for sick children or "personal leave days" to be used as the employee wishes. Extension of sick leave to cover a serious illness of a child, reduced transfers within the corporate network, and more extensive maternity and paternity leave policies contribute to worker morale. Many companies have also instituted physical fitness programs which improve the health of employees and their families.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Blue Cross-Blue Shield, Little Rock, Arkansas
Pyramid Life, Little Rock, Arkansas
Levi Strauss Corporation, Greensboro, North Carolina
Control Data, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Munro and Company, Arkansas (Physical Fitness Program)

2. Information Programs

The Referral System - Matching Employee Needs with Providers.

Finding and selecting quality day care centers can be one of the most pressing and difficult problems facing working parents. Day care may be scarce, not available during an employee's work hours, or far from home or the work site. Day care for infants is available on a limited basis and for pre-school handicapped children is almost non-existent. Summer, school holidays, and after-school care are especially difficult for parents of school-age children.

Referral services may be in-house systems or contracted with independent firms supplying these services. A firm may contribute to or contract with a local agency, join a consortium of companies to jointly underwrite the service or develop an in-house system.

Requirements to develop an in-house system are:

1) Securing and developing a list of day care providers
2) Updating those lists and classifying centers according to geographical location
3) Gathering specific information about these centers such as capacity, hours of operation, costs, ages of children served, number of slots currently available, etc.
4) Publishing this data in map and brochure form
5) Establishing administrative procedures to keep information current, answer questions by employees and assist in securing day care for employees if so desired.

Employees may also provide educational assistance to parents by offering information on sources of financial assistance for child care, tax information, guidelines for selecting a child care arrangement and workshops and pamphlets on how to select quality child care.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Duke University, Personnel Department, Durham, North Carolina; Durham Day Care Council, Hotline, Durham, North Carolina; Child Care Resource Center, Cambridge, Massachusettes; Child Care Switchboard, San Franciso, California; Child Care Information Service, Pasadena, California; Steelcase, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

PARENTING EDUCATION

Seminars focusing on parenting issues can be easily offered during lunch hours or regularly scheduled times. Topics such as stress management within the family, discipline, adolescent behavior, etc. are popular and can be offered within a limited or expanded time frame. These programs are generally set up on a contractual basis with an outside resource and offer good public relations value for the company in the surrounding community. These programs inform working parents about resources available at work and in the community, help to establish support systems involving other parents and professionals and create a forum for discussion of work and family issues.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

The Parent Center, Little Rock (offers seminars for businesses)
Center for Parenting Studies, Wheelock College, Boston, Mass. (holds seminars for businesses)
Honeywell, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota
Toys 'N Things, St. Paul, Minnesota

3. Financial Assistance

Vendor Program

This employer assistance program involves the purchase by the employer of a number of enrollment spaces or "slots" in one or more existing day care centers and the subsequent offering of these slots to employees at a reduced rate. The subsidizing of these slots, or the employer's contribution, can be based on the empoyee's income and/or family size. This policy is usually referred to as a "sliding fee scale."

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Orlando County Community Child Care, Orlando, Florida
Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Citrus Growers Association, Winter Garden, Florida

Voucher Program

The voucher program is another alternative for provision of day care by the employer. The voucher refers to a certificate for payment given to the parent worth a specified amount toward the purchase of day care from any provider. This leaves the total responsibility of choice of facilities to the employee. The employer may either fully cover the cost of tuition or subsidize the cost based on employee income and/or family size.

The Ford Foundation modifies this idea by raising an employee's paycheck to cover the costs of day care expenses. Polaroid Corporation sets limits of use by providing vouchers to employees earning under $20,000.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, Mass.
Ford Foundation, New York, New York

Flexible Benefit Plans

Most often called "cafeteria" plans, these offer the greatest amount of flexibility to the employee in choosing benefits which are most suited to his or her needs. A cafeteria plan is set up with a core of mandatory benefits and a group of optional benefits from which a proscribed number may be chosen. These benefits may be selected according to such factors as age, rate of pay, years of service, and family status. Child care is often included as an optional benefit in this type of plan.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

American Can Company, Greenwich, Connecticut
Proctor and Gamble, Cincinnati, Ohio

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

One of the most difficult problems for working parents is finding adequate child care at an *affordable*

cost. Charitable donations to existing community resources can provide the benefits of reduction of costs for care while discouraging proliferation of unneeded facilities or duplication of services.

By creating a relationship with chosen providers, a company can influence how its employees receive services and whether those services are affordable to the parents who need them. Donations may be either monetary gifts or subsidies or in-kind (furnishings, administrative and financial services, use of management executives to provide needed expertise, use of data processing or computer equipment, etc). Possibilities are limitless and flexible enough to meet the needs of each situation. A company might wish to contribute to a center so that operating hours are lengthened to cover the child care needs of employees who work an extended shift.

Other companies have supported projects which provide short-term care for sick children and working parents. The Berkeley Sick Child Care Program sends a paraprofessional to the home to care for the child, freeing parents to go to work. The fee for this service in 1980 was on a sliding scale from no charge (for families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to $3.50 per hour. Another service in this project is the "Wheezies and Sneezies Day Care Center", a short-term day care service for children just getting over an illness but not yet well enough to resume their normal activities or return to regular day care and school.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Child Care Services, Inc. Minneapolis, Minnesota
Berkeley Sick Child Care, Berkeley, California

FAMILY DAY CARE SYSTEMS

Recruitment of family day care home providers to offer care for employees' children in their homes is a less expensive alternative to on-site or consortium centers. It is a particularly attractive direct service option for states such as Arkansas where many industries are located in rural areas and employees commute to work.

This system offers a variety of benefits which include:

1) small units of care which give a more personal aspect to child care and which many parents prefer
2) a system which allows parents to leave children in their home communities
3) employers have direct control over the quality of care offered and can require standards be met
4) usually offers a less expensive form of care than centers because of lower overhead
5) flexibility of hours for shift work or overtime
6) supervision of school-age children during the summers, school holidays, after-school hours, and emergencies

For a company which has employees spread over a large geographical area, this is perhaps the most viable option for direct services provision.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

4. Direct Services

1) On-site Centers

The institution of an on-site day care center represents the maximum commitment of an employer to day care. The center can be located at or near the work site and may be operated as a division of the parent company, subsidiary corporation or nonprofit independent corporation. Financial support can include start-up costs, operating expenses and subsidies for tuition. Administrative and maintenance duties may be assumed by the proper divisions of the parent corporation. The employer may hire a professional staff or sub-contract with a professional child care firm. The company may also provide day care services as a partially subsidized operation rather than a free program for employees.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Union Medical Center, El Dorado, Arkansas
St. Vincent's Infirmary, Little Rock, Arkansas
Baptist Medical Center, Little Rock, Arkansas
Stride Rite, Boston, Massachusetts
PCS International, Inc., Matthews, North Carolina
Forney Engineering, Carrollton, Texas
Zale Corporation, Dallas, Texas

2) Off-Site Consortium Centers

Several employers may decide to share the costs and risks of establishing a day care center. This can be especially lucrative in an industrial park or downtown business district. Another possibility is located in a neighborhood or residential area in which many employees reside.

The companies provide monies for start-up expenses, construction of a facility or rehabilitation of an existing facility, participation on a governing board of directors, administrative services such as budget management, personnel practice, and legal services. Employers may underwrite operating costs of the center and offer partial tuition subsidy.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Control Data/Pillsbury/North States Power/Lutheran Brotherhood, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Downtown Day Care Center, St. Louis, Missouri
Urban Affairs Corporation Centers, Houston, Texas
Mercy Medical Hospital/Anoka Ramsey Community College, Coon River, Michigan
Broadcasters Child Development Center, Washington, D.C.

Pros

1. FLEXIBLE PERSONNEL POLICIES

a) Flexible scheduling can reduce company's overtime expenses
b) Improves worker morale and reduces absenteeism and turnover
c) Allows mothers of school-age children to work and still care for the children
d) Allowances made for sick children reduce stress, worry, and guilt for employees

2. INFORMATION PROGRAMS

a) Makes existing day care facilities more available to employees
b) Meets employee's particular needs
c) Is a good highly visible public relations effort
d) Effective recruiting tool as employee benefit
e) May stimulate additional day care in communities where demand is greater than supply
f) Helps to develop support systems and identify community resources

3. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

a) **Vendor Program**
   1) Increases availability of child care for employees
   2) Subsidizes tuition costs of employee's children
   3) Requires no initial capital investment for facility or program
   4) Company has no management responsibility
   5) Protects company from potential liability
   6) Ideal for small companies with low need

b) **Voucher Program**
   1) Respects parent's choice of day care facilities
   2) Offers flexibility to employees
   3) Helps employees meet the rising cost of day care
   4) Beneficial to the employer who has many small locations
   5) Does not require capital investment
   6) Protects company from potential liability
   7) Requires no participation in management from the company

C) **Flexible Benefit Plans**
   1) Allows employees to select benefits which are most suited to their current needs
   2) Good recruiting tool
   3) Can be tailored to meet diverse demands of all age groups and employment levels

d) **Charitable Donations**
   1) Often requires only participation of designated corporate giving officer
   2) Reduces duplication of services and strengthens existing community resources
   3) Provides incentives for community groups to offer needed services
   4) Provides tax advantages under allowable charitable deductions

4. DIRECT SERVICES

a) **On-site Centers**
   1) Provides access to the child by parents during breaks in their work schedules
   2) Is a good, highly visible public relations effort
   3) Gives parents security because the child is near to the work site
   4) Provides quality control for the company and ensures a top quality developmental program for employees' children

b) **Off-site Consortium Centers**
   1) All companies share the risks, costs, and liabilities of operation of the center
   2) Increases availability of resources for developing a quality day care program
   3) Serves a greater segment of the community and decreases under-utilization of the facility because the center draws from a broader base
   4) Subsidizes tuition costs for low-income employees; can serve as a match to draw federal dollars (Title XX)
   5) Allows parents to have children near their place of employment

c) **Family Day Care Systems**
   1) Less costly than on-site or consortium centers because of no initial capital outlays for facilities
   2) Allows flexibility for employees
   3) Increases needed community resources
   4) Usually is a less expensive form of care for employees
   5) Works particularly well when employees are scattered over a large geographical area

Cons

1. FLEXIBLE PERSONNEL POLICIES

a) Difficult to supervise large groups of people on different work schedules
b) Difficulties in administering employee benefit packages
c) Difficulties for employees in car-pooling
d) Possibility for abuse by some employees

2. INFORMATION PROGRAMS

a) Requires some administration in keeping information current
b) Some cost involved in gathering and publishing of information
c) If a consortium is formed, requires co-operation of companies involved in keep system functioning
d) If an in-house system is established it can result in unnecessary repetition of efforts of other companies
e) Seminars require co-ordination of work schedules and a contracting procedure with an out-of-company source

3. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

a) **Vendor Program**
   1) Difficulty arises in purchasing slots in locations preferrable to employees
   2) Can discriminate against providers in the community
   3) Program has small public relations value because of low visibility
   4) Requires commitment for spaces on part of employer without assurance of use by employees

b) **Voucher Program**
   1) Day Care may not be available in ample supply or during hours which match employer's work schedule
   2) Requires some administrative procedures
   3) The sliding fee scale will require additional administrative costs

c) **Flexible Benefit Plans**
   1) More costly than standard benefit plans because of increased administrative costs
   2) Difficulties in co-ordination if a third party benefits administrator is used

d) **Charitable Donations**
   1) Does not give the company as much direct control over programs it supports
   2) Often requires establishment of corporate giving policies within the company and designation of a corporate giving officer

4. DIRECT SERVICES

a) **On-site Centers**
   1) Costs must be weighted against bene'its to determine if operation of an on-site center is financially feasible and cost effective for a company
   2) Usually requires a large initial financial investment and a commitment for continued funding
   3) Centers have not been consistently successful. Company executives cited the following reasons for discontinuing the operations:
      - Company went out of business or moved
      - Under-utilization by employees
      - Too expensive
      - Recession
   4) Requires detailed planning and extensive surveys to adequately determine need
   5) On-site center requires a long-term commitment on the part of the company to successfully continue operation

b) **Off-site Consortium Centers**
   1) Requires that all companies work in co-coperation to maintain facility
   2) More community children may be enrolled in the center than children of employees
   3) May not meet full enrollment because parents prefer residential location
   4 Requires continuing commitment of part of employers to maintain a quality day care center

c) **Family Day Care Systems**
   1) Often difficult to recruit suitable providers with acceptable homes
   2) Difficult to administer if spread over a large geographical area
   3) May be under-utilized in certain communities
   4) Requires provision of provider training to maintain quality settings

Conclusion

Your company is unique, as is each family, and we cannot recommend one option over another. Determination of which option you may choose to pursue must be a decision on the part of the management team of each business and with consideration of your management objectives. You must ask yourself the following questions.

- Does a child care initiative make sense for you and your employees?
- Would adoption of such a program contribute a stated company objectives?
- What are the current and projected needs for child care among your employees?
- Does the existing network of community resources adequately meet your employee's needs?
- Does your company have above average turnover and absenteeism or difficulty in recruiting a stable work force? Would family support programs reduce these problems?

If you choose to pursue establishment of a family support program within your company you may want to contact a national or local resource person or a company with a similar program already in place. Listings of nationally recognized resource persons and additional information follow.

Adoption of family support systems can be considered a way to address the predominant concerns of an increasingly large proportion of your work force. Not only will your company be responsive to the stresses faced by many of your employees but also meet management objectives at the same time.

Additional Resources

Booklet on tax and liability questions concerning these options is available from Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

Child Care Initiatives for Working Parents - Why Employers Get Involved, Magid, Renee Y., American Management Associations, AMA Membership Publications Division, 135 West 50th Street, New York, N.Y. 10020.

A Corporate Reader - Work and Family Life in the 1980's, Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Employer Supported Child Care: Investing in Human Resources, Auburn House Publishing Company, 14 Dedham St., Dover, MA 02030.

Employers and Child Care: Establishing Services Through the Workplace, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Secretary, Women's Bureau, Washington, D.C. 20210.

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